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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 DAKAR 000547

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [SG](#)
SUBJECT: SENEGAL: REFLECTIONS ON THE THREAT AND THE
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRANS-SAHARA COUNTERTERRORISM
PARTNERSHIP

REF: A. STATE 018585 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. 05 DAKAR 2434 (NOTAL)

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Classified By: Ambassador Janice L. Jacobs for reasons 1.4 (a) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (S/NF) With a population of approximately 12 million, democratic, pro-Western Senegal should remain stable for the foreseeable future. Despite its predominately Islamic population and high levels of unemployment, there is no evidence, and indeed little chance, that Jihadist ideologies have taken or will take root. Strategically, Senegal is the southwestern port to the Sahara. With its porous borders and commercially valuable regional air and sea ports, it serves as a conduit to be exploited by transnational criminals, traffickers, and, potentially, terrorists. Ethnic harmony, a Sufi-based tolerant form of Islam, respected security services, and a stable, democratic government combine to deny traction to Salafist ideologues. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the open economy serves as a safe haven to support activities for Hezbollah among the local Lebanese community, Al-Qaida in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Movement of Democratic Forces of the Casamance (MFDC) rebellion. The battle against transnational terrorism in Senegal should focus on supporting Senegalese counter-radicalism vice counter-terrorism. To enhance our probability of success, USG activities should: (a) increase regional cooperation among partner countries; (b) give proportionate weight to the civil component, e.g., the informational, social, cultural, political, and economic spectrums of the conflict, especially development assistance and outreach programs that target Koranic schools and other Islamic institutions; (c) appreciate local realities, particularly in terms of technological solutions; and (d) respect the laws of the nations we are engaging. END SUMMARY.

THE ENVIRONMENT

[1](#)3. (C) On the edge of the Sahel, Senegal is the southwestern port to the Sahara. Blessed with commercially valuable regional air and sea ports, it has been a regional trade

center since the mid-1700s. After French colonial efforts from Algeria failed to reach Timbuktu, it was French-led Senegalese tirailleurs (infantry) who finally captured the city, and solidified the French position in the Sahel, in 1894. Senegal's role as a regional leader continues today as officers and soldiers from the ministries of Defense and Interior serve as peacekeepers and in CIVPOL in Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Haiti.

14. (C) Senegalese religious leaders and much of the population may deplore the U.S. in Iraq, but there has been little or no public protest against it. Likewise, Senegalese criticism of our policies toward the Palestinians and Israel has been largely limited to private comments, though the Lebanese community protested last year's Israeli incursions in Lebanon. Senegalese understand, sympathize with and support our attempts to curb Al-Qaida, and, with rare exceptions, accept our role in Afghanistan. What social unrest there is usually limited to domestic issues. Bad meat at the university cafeteria, trade union disputes among high school teachers, or fuel price increases can trigger unanticipated strikes and spontaneous public demonstrations that are effectively contained as security services control the situation and presidency-designated brokers from appropriate ministries rapidly inject themselves into the flow of events.

15. (C) Senegal's marabout-based Sufism has provided a religious leadership committed to traditional religious rites, respect of the country's well-entrenched Catholic minority, political consensus, social peace and respect for the state. The great majority of Senegalese belong to one of four moderate Sufi Brotherhoods, the Tijane, Mouride, Layenne or Qu'adria. On occasions when social or political problems appear to have no ready solution, there is often

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recourse to the brotherhoods' marabouts and khalifs as mediators. At the national level, the political elite takes care to cultivate strong and close links to brotherhood leaders, while at the local level, the major political parties have supported religious figures with cash or material support. The recent presidential election showed how current President Wade used the support of his own Mourides and the benign neutrality of the Tijanes to win election in the first round with 56 percent of the vote despite unemployment of 50 percent, rising consumer prices, and general social malaise. There are Salafists in Senegal, and while they are politically ambitious, they are either limited to the eastern border areas, few in number and ageing in Dakar and Saint Louis, or torn by internal disputes. Jihadists may have a few sympathizers here, but if they search for any real foothold, they would face strong competition and probably exclusion.

16. (C) The country's Achilles heel is the underperforming economy. More than half the population lives in poverty; one-third to one-half have no reliable employment; the agricultural sector, which employs 60 percent of the population, is weak and unreliable; and most youth see emigration as a panacea, as shown by the recent flight of thousands of Senegalese to the Canary Islands. Corruption is also an issue, and while Wade has said the right things about combating it, members of his own inner circle are often rumored to demand bribes and percentages of investments.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

17. (S/NF) There have been no/no terrorist attacks against U.S. interests or facilities in Dakar. Reporting indicates that Hizballah, Al Qaida in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and a number of Islamic NGOs are present in Senegal. The Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance (MFDC) is likely to be formally designated by the NCTC as a Tier Three terrorist group in the near future.

-- a. Senegal's large Lebanese population, estimated to number up to 120,000, is known to provide financial support to Hizballah (Party of God), though it is impossible to quantify the amounts that go to political versus terrorist activities. In July 2006, hundreds of Senegalese religious, civil society, and political party figures joined the ethnic Lebanese community in rally to condemn Israel's bombardment of targets in southern Lebanon. Although peaceful, placards displayed strong anti-U.S. and anti-Israeli sentiment and praised Hizballah. Nonetheless, the Political and Regional Affairs Sections meet with the head of the Lebanese religious community from time to time.

-- b. Periodic sensitive reporting indicates that AQIM, formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) transits Senegal. Recent reporting from a sensitive source indicates that members may be in Dakar procuring materials for an attack elsewhere in the region. The report noted, &AQIM considered Senegal a supply base and would not conduct attacks there,8 and noted &there were many AQIM sympathizers who worked or lived in Senegal.8 This report is consistent with mission's assessment that Senegal has been used as a transit point for Al Qaida and the presence of support cells cannot be ruled out.

-- c. A number of Islamic NGOs have a presence, including World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) and al-Haramayn AKA Action Humanitaire et Solidarite. Additionally, there are number of local Islamic groups (e.g., Moustachidines Wal Moustachidates, Jamatu Ibadou Rahmande and Jamaat'al-Tabligh) that could provide support or cover for identified terrorist groups. Senegalese security services closely monitor the activities of such groups.

-- d. A 20-year old insurgency in Casamance continues to fester with much of the violence being attributed to the MFDC. Although final resolution looked possible only a year ago, by late 2006 there was renewed violence, including increased banditry in zones along the Gambian border. On New

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Year's Eve, a leading local figure engaged in the peace process was assassinated, though the killing may have been political rather than related to the rebellion. In January, Senegalese troops protecting Moroccan deminers were attacked twice in the south of the region by a rebel faction formerly considered moderate. The aged long-time leader of the rebels' political wing died in Paris in January, leaving the rebel movement without a universally recognized figurehead. Neither the Government nor the rebel movement has negotiators who are widely respected in the Casamance, and the short-term prospects for successful talks leading to peace are slim.

18. (S/NF) Due to its commercially valuable regional air and sea ports, porous borders, and open economy, Senegal will remain a conduit to be exploited by transnational criminals, traffickers, and, potentially, terrorists.

TSCTP PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

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19. (C) Senegal continued to enhance its ability to combat terrorism, prosecute terror suspects and respond to emergencies. As participants in the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership, more than 180 Senegalese government officials attended four State Department Anti-terrorism Assistance (ATA) training programs. Senegalese military officials attended a counterterrorism seminar in Algiers and attended the Chiefs of Defense and Directors of Military Intelligence conferences. The Defense International Institute of Legal Studies and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) gave separate seminars on the legal aspects of fighting terrorism.

¶10. (C) As we move forward with TSCTP, we believe four factors would improve the quality of the program:

-- a. Enhance Sustainability: The "American Way" is not always indigenously sustainable in West Africa. As an example, the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES), a high-tech, computer based immigration tracking system was first deployed in 2003. The concept was to determine exactly who was transiting the international airport. The program was discontinued at the end of FY-2006. The GOS immigration officials responsible for using the system were plagued by software and hardware problems that required frequent visits by maintenance teams from CONUS. Often the problems were minor, but the users lacked the technical competency to resolve them. In the end, after spending several hundreds of thousands of dollars, funding for the program was terminated. As we proceed with other high-tech solutions to facilitate the regional sharing of intelligence, we need to assure that long-term maintenance and training are addressed. If we do not address the issue of sustainability during the program design phase, it will most likely fail.

-- b. Balance the Political, Military, Economic and Informational Aspects of the Program: The current TSCTP program focuses too much on military and security assistance. We have only received USD 175,000 in TSCTP funds to counter radicalism with another USD 800,000 on the horizon, but we believe that in Senegal the bulk of our TSCTP activities should be these &soft8 programs rather than military ones. (See Ref B for an overview of Muslim engagement activities in Senegal.) In Senegal, the objective is to prevent terrorist attacks. We are not at the stage yet where we need to find, fix and destroy terrorists. To foster moderate Islam in Senegal, robust educational and cultural programs as well as academic exchanges are designed to counter the growth of radical Islam. Our much touted Muslim outreach program involves the entire mission and includes donations of books in Arabic; international visitor programs for imams, marabouts and journalists; and iftars. Health care and feeding programs at Koranic schools and facilitating the study of English and of American culture are empowering the under-privileged and successor generations of young Muslims. Likewise, programs to support good governance, civil society engagement and economic reform are components to counter radicalism vice counter terrorism.

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-- c. Regional Cooperation: Despite mutual mistrust and conflicting national interests, we should strive to foster cooperation at every level. Anti Terrorism Assistance, for example, has proposed offering regional courses in Dakar for working-level officers. This is an excellent first step. All classroom instruction and seminars should strive to integrate the participants of all partner countries. Additionally, the French military and police offer a variety of training programs in the region. USG engagement efforts should be closely coordinated with the French, to prevent mistrust and capitalize upon their long-term experience in the region.

-- d. Respect Local Law: The agency responsible, under current Senegalese law, for combating terrorism is the Ministry of the Interior. If the threat or incident is beyond the Ministry of Interior's capacity, the Gendarmes, first, followed by the Senegalese Armed Forces will assist. During a recent conference, a senior-level military officer noted that the law was very clear on this matter and identified a lack of interoperability, coordination, and communications between the various GOS institutions as a serious vulnerability to their response. He noted that often USG assistance was "stove-piped" to specific groups, e.g., the military or police, and reinforced this vulnerability rather than resolved it. Some counter-terrorist training, he noted, was going to military elements that have no legal

authority to use the training on Senegalese territory. The counter-terrorist training provided should be targeted to the groups that will actually use it during an incident.

¶11. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar,s SIPRNET website at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.

¶12. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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